

Needham Center Study

Planning & Zoning Principles

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Prepared for:
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Town of Needham

Every community planning process involves four important elements:

- Identify...
 - The problem
 - The contributing factors
 - Stakeholders
 - Principles and measures of success
- Evaluate...
 - Issues and Constraints
 - Realistic opportunities
 - Priorities
 - Trade-offs
- Decide...
 - Best courses of action in light of acceptable trade-offs
 - Roles & responsibilities
 - Organized plan
- Implement...
 - Policies
 - Regulations
 - Public & private investments
 - Monitoring, self-assessment, adjustment

**NEEDHAM IS
HERE**

Identification

- Needham's present zoning contributes to the redevelopment barriers that exist in Needham Center
- Some downtown properties have a little room to grow, but most are already at or over their maximum development potential
- The stakeholders include downtown property owners, businesses, and residents, as well as developers and town boards...and yes, the entire community
- Successful outcomes would include:
 - Adoption of zoning that reduces barriers, encourages redevelopment, and protects the public interest in a vital, attractive business district
 - Fair, predictable development review and permitting system
 - New investment in downtown properties
 - Mix of goods, services, and housing

Evaluation

- Issues and Constraints

- Traffic & circulation
- “Shape” and physical form of the downtown area
- Parking: supply, location, needs of various users
- Existing property rights
- Value of existing built assets must be accounted for in design of incentives to encourage redevelopment
- Quality of life in adjacent residential neighborhoods

- Opportunities

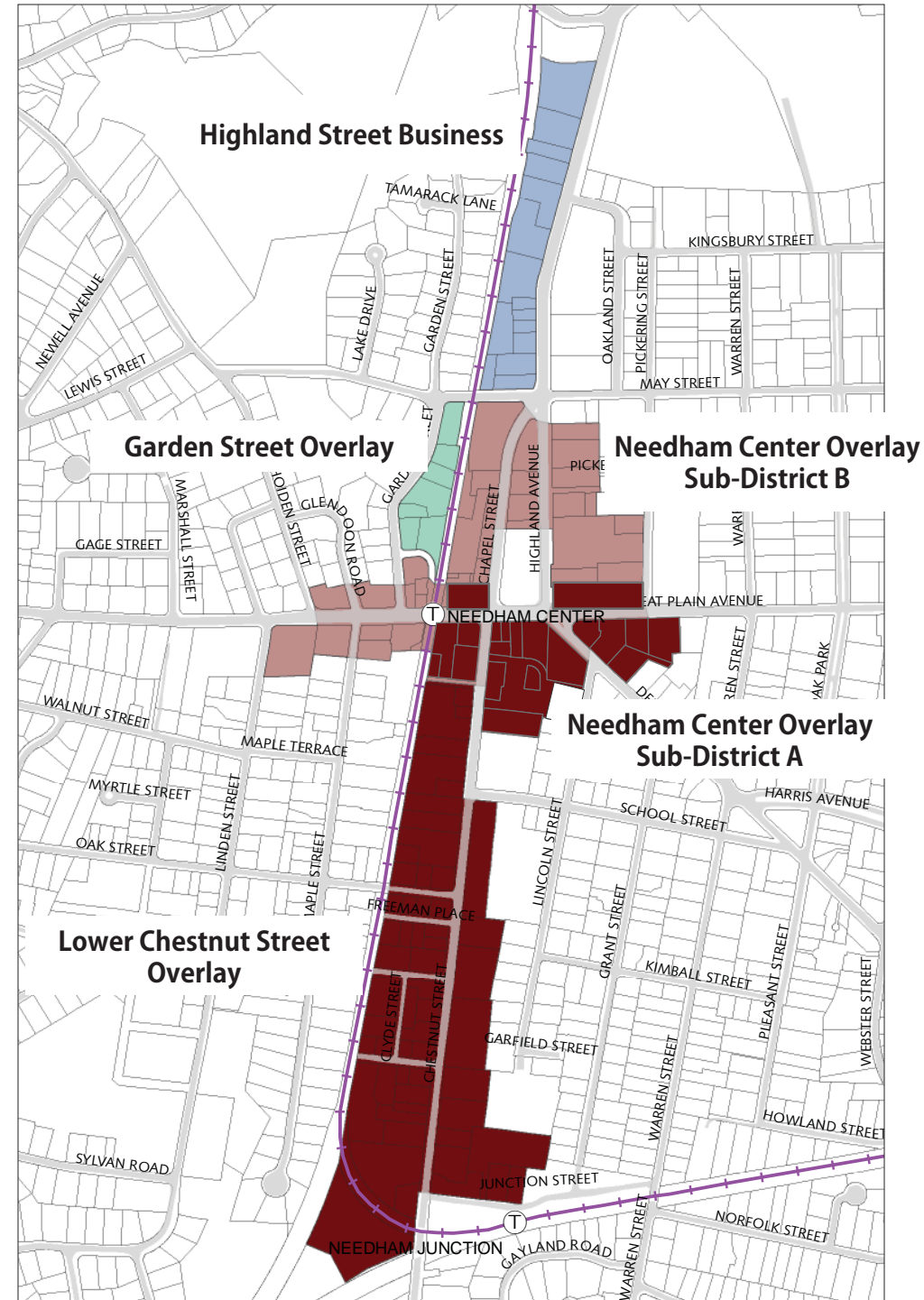
- Encourage new investment in underutilized, obsolete, or “tired” properties
- Adopt design guidelines
- Encourage parcel assembly
- Provide reasonable guarantees to applicants
- Revisit off-street parking requirements and public-private responsibilities for adequate parking supply

Evaluation

- Priorities
 - Downtown that serves as the commercial, cultural, social, and civic center of the town
 - Improved appearance of buildings and sites
 - Walkable area
 - Regulatory fairness
 - Higher property values (and more tax revenue)
 - “Living” downtown with market-rate and affordable housing
- The key trade-off for allowing more development and broader range of use privileges is mandatory design guidelines. In exchange, property owners may propose:
 - Taller buildings
 - More intensive use of existing properties
 - Market-rate or mixed-income housing
 - Some relief for parking obligations

Decisions

- **Overlay Districts:**
 - Preserve existing property rights
 - Create more choices
 - Offer new development privileges under a different set of rules
 - Provide more flexibility to applicants and town boards
 - Do not have to follow existing zoning district boundaries



Decisions

- Needham Center
 - Preserves the basic use privileges of the underlying zone
 - Adds clear use regulations for up to **five** upper-story **housing units** by right, more units by special permit
 - Divides Center Business (underlying district) into two sub-districts in order to accommodate different height regulations
 - Provides for significant increase in maximum **FAR**, from 1.0 (existing) to **2.0 by right** or **3.0 by special permit**
 - **Minimum lot 15,000 sq. ft.** (existing 10,000 sq. ft.)
 - Preserves existing side/rear setback rules for lots adjacent to residential districts
 - Requires **affordable units** in **mixed-use buildings** with **six** or more units

Decisions

- Chestnut Street
 - Overlay applies only to Chestnut Street, not Garden Street
 - Key objectives: parcel assembly, access management (fewer curb cuts), and buildings closer to the street
 - Allows taller buildings - like Needham Center Sub-District A - but only on lots with frontage on Chestnut Street
- Minimum lot 15,000 sq. ft. (existing minimum 10,000 sq. ft.)
- Minimum frontage 100 feet (existing minimum 80 feet)
- Minimum and maximum front setbacks, required “build to” line along a majority of lot frontage
- Significant increase in maximum FAR, from 0.70 (existing) to 1.50 by right, 2.0 by special permit

Decisions

- Garden Street
 - Not as use-intensive as Chestnut Street Overlay
 - Restaurants, retail only by special permit
 - Multi-family dwellings by special permit
 - Minimum lot 20,000 sq. ft. (existing 10,000 sq. ft.)
 - Maximum FAR 1.20 (existing 0.70), and no special permit option to increase FAR above 1.20
- Highland Avenue Business District
 - Not an overlay district
 - Replaces existing Business District on Highland Avenue
 - Proposed regulations primarily a “clean-up” of existing dimensional rules in order to achieve consistency with Needham’s other business districts

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	EXISTING			PROPOSED			
Dimensional Standard	Center Business	Chestnut Street	Business	Needham Center Overlay	Lower Chestnut Street Overlay	Garden Street Overlay	Highland Avenue Business
Minimum Lot Area	10,000 sq. ft.	10,000 sq. ft.	10,000 sq. ft.	15,000 sq. ft.	15,000 sq. ft.	20,000 sq. ft.	10,000 sq. ft.
Minimum Frontage	80 feet	80 feet	80 feet	80 feet	100 feet	80 feet	80 feet
Maximum Building Height: By Right	35 feet 2.5 stories	35 feet 2.5 stories	40 feet 3 stories	Sub-District A 35 feet 2.5 stories Sub-District B 2.5 stories 35 feet	35 feet 2.5 stories	35 feet 2.5 stories	40 feet 3 stories
Maximum Building Height: By Special Permit	N/A	N/A	N/A	Sub-District A: 37 feet, 3 stories <u>or</u> 48 feet 3+1 stories Sub-District B: 37 feet 2+1 stories	For lots with frontage on Chestnut St: 37 feet 3 stories <u>or</u> 48 feet 3+1 stories	37 feet 2+1 stories	N/A
<u>Minimum</u> Building Height	N/A	N/A	N/A	Sub-District A: 2 stories, 27 feet	N/A	N/A	N/A
Floor Area Ratio	1.00 or as existing on 1/1/90, whichever is greater	0.70	N/A	2.00 by right 3.00 by special permit	1.50 by right 2.00 by special permit	1.20	1.00
Front Setback	Minimum 3 feet, or average of adjacent setbacks, whichever is smaller	Minimum 20 feet	Minimum 10 feet for lots existing on 4/14/52	Minimum 0 feet	Minimum 5 feet or average of setbacks within 100 feet, whichever is smaller	Minimum 10 feet or average of setbacks within 100 feet, whichever is smaller	Minimum 0 feet

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	EXISTING			PROPOSED			
Dimensional Standard	Center Business	Chestnut Street	Business	Needham Center Overlay	Lower Chestnut Street Overlay	Garden Street Overlay	Highland Avenue Business
Side and Rear Setback Adjacent to Residential Zones	Minimum 50 feet, including 25-ft. landscaped buffer closest to residential boundary	Minimum 50 feet, including 25-ft. landscaped buffer closest to residential boundary	50 feet for lots rezoned to B District after 4/15/52	Same as Center Business	Same as Chestnut Street, except: for lots adjacent to MBTA ROW, minimum 25-ft. setback and 10-ft. landscaped buffer	Minimum 10 feet side and rear	Same as existing
Building Coverage	N/A	N/A	Varies by class of use and building height, from 25% to 45%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Enclosed Parking	Included within FAR calculation; certain design standards also apply	N/A	Coverage increase by 2.5% for each 1 sq. ft. of enclosed parking	Underground parking exempt from FAR	Underground parking exempt from FAR	Underground parking exempt from FAR	N/A
Basic Parking Requirements	Per ZBL Section 5.1.2	Per ZBL Section 5.1.2	Per ZBL Section 5.1.2	Per ZBL Section 5.1.2 except: No parking required for retail <800 sq. ft. Reduced parking for buildings with more than 40% of floor area located in upper stories Bike racks required for residential uses Payment in lieu of parking spaces to Off-Street Parking Fund	Same as Needham Center Overlay	Same as Lower Chestnut Overlay	Per ZBL Section 5.1.2 (no change proposed)

Decisions

- Related Zoning Recommendations
 - Provide clear regulations for outdoor display of retail goods for sale - in any business district, not limited to the proposed overlay districts
 - Outdoor display requires both zoning and non-zoning regulations and administrative procedures
- Affordable Housing
 - Generated considerable discussion
 - Consensus: should be required in larger (6+ unit) mixed-use or multi-family developments
 - Needham Center Study creates an opportunity for Needham to implement its Housing Plan
 - Affordable units will “count” on Subsidized Housing Inventory

Implementation

- Zoning bylaws require 2/3 vote of town meeting
- Proposed zoning text still under review
- Major responsibility for zoning component of the Needham Center Study lies with the Planning Board and Planning Department
- Other policies, e.g., outdoor display of retail goods for sale, also require actions by Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, DPW
- Policy, strategic, problem-solving role of economic development coordinator
- In addition...
 - Long-term parking solutions will require public investment in addition to private investment
 - Financing mechanisms exist to help Needham provide more public parking
- Zoning alone does not guarantee desired outcomes